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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: MINISTER OF JUSTICE WELCOMES LAW ENFORCEMENT WORKING GROUP BRIEF

Ref: Buenos Aires 0849

¶1. (SBU) Argentine Minister of Justice, Security and Human Rights Julio Alak invited the Embassy Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG) to brief him October 16 on the range of USG activities in the law enforcement area and to make suggestions regarding challenges he should address as minister. His Ministry is in charge of the Argentine Federal Police (PFA), the Gendarmeria National (Frontier Guard), the Prefectura (Coast Guard), the Airport Police (PSA) and the prisons authorities. Alak, the long-serving mayor of Buenos Aires provincial capital La Plata, manifested a strong interest in U.S. approaches to law enforcement (both policies and administration) and candidly described his relative inexperience in managing law enforcement issues. Soon after his assumption of the ministry in July and in a meeting with DCM (reftel), Alak had requested the multi-agency law enforcement brief from the USG.

¶2. (SBU) Alak began the meeting by describing his aspiration to develop national plans in all three areas under his jurisdiction: justice, security, and human rights. He hoped to make these plans apolitical and durable by including input from different political parties, as well as consulting the United Nations, academic experts, and supportive foreign embassies. Alak said that he also aspires to create a National Institute for Security Studies, something that would have a broader outlook than the service-oriented schools or training programs under the various law enforcement agencies. He said that the Government of Argentina would likely request assistance from the USG in starting such an institution.

¶3. (SBU) Alak also described his plan to address Argentina's ongoing weakness in terms of radar coverage, something that has made it difficult to assess and ultimately respond to a perceived increase in small aircraft drug trafficking flights into Argentina from Bolivia and Paraguay. Alak said he would like to establish a system of 12 mobile radars along the northern borders, collaborating with the governments of Bolivia and Paraguay. Referencing the ongoing but long-delayed Ministry of Defense plan to purchase new three-dimensional radars, Alak said "we don't want to wait for the military."

¶4. (SBU) Following Alak's opening, DCM and representatives from Embassy offices of DEA, ICE, FBI, Department of Justice, Military Group, RSO, Economic and Political Sections briefed the minister on cooperative programs (joint investigations, training), trends in illicit activities, and possible areas for reform. Among important reforms mentioned by the LEWG were:

-- Encouragement to ensure effective prosecution and sentencing of those arrested for human trafficking (TIP).

-- Enhancing law enforcement authorities to seize illicit precursor chemicals and press charges against traffickers.

-- Streamlining procedures for seizing and disposing of illicit criminal assets.

-- Establishing legal sanction against the clandestine movement of bulk cash (eliminating the current requirement to link the cash to another illegal activity).

-- Establishing a formal Memorandum of Understanding to govern Embassy requests for security coverage by PFA and other forces.

-- A proposal that Argentina participate in U.S. DNA and fingerprint banks.

¶ 15. (SBU) Alak also requested a number of follow-ups from Embassy offices, including information on FBI involvement and conclusions regarding the investigation of the 1994 bombing of Jewish cultural center AMIA and information on security features in U.S. passports. He requested the opportunity as well to participate in upcoming DEA and INL-sponsored trainings on precursor chemicals and showed interest in the possibility of visiting JIATF-South and the U.S.-Mexico border to view technology and procedures of value to Argentine law enforcement and border control.

¶ 16. (SBU) Comment: Alak devoted over two hours to the briefing and made extra time to hear from all LEWG participants. He asked a number of questions about U.S. law enforcement structures, particularly focused on the balance between federal, state and local law enforcement responsibilities. Although Alak continues to face a

sharp learning curve on some elements in his portfolio, we are pleased with his strongly expressed willingness to work with us. In a deviation from past practice at the MOJ, Alak also included three subordinates in the meeting. He both relied upon them for information and tasked them with follow-up.

MARTINEZ